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President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10.00 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Eduard Kukan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia.

Mr. Kukan (Slovakia): At the outset, I would like to warmly congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. I am confident that your vast experience and outstanding record of achievements will guarantee the best results for this session. I wish you every success in this crucial role. I would also like to extend my thanks to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia, for the productive way in which he managed the affairs of the fifty-fourth session. I also welcome Tuvalu as the new Member of our Organization.

Globalization is definitely the most typical phenomenon of the upcoming turn of the millennium. It is frequently criticized and at other times is accepted uncritically; however, it definitely brings unprecedented progress and, at the same time, problems and challenges. The economic boom also has another aspect in the form of large social differences. The environment often suffers from the industrial boom. Due to new communication technologies, direct human contact is forgotten. I could continue in this vein.

The world community also has to face other problems, which are beginning to display a transregional nature — for instance, organized crime, terrorism and emerging armed conflicts. Who is better prepared to tackle all this than the United Nations — the most global institution we have.

In my view, the Millennium Summit was the most significant step on this very demanding road. It spelled progress when compared with similar meetings in the past, as this time it dealt with the urgent problems of civilization to a greater extent. Moreover, the Millennium Summit managed to draw the attention of the whole world to problems which the United Nations considers to be of the greatest importance. However, to make progress, a lot still remains to be done. Therefore, I will take the liberty of commencing my contribution precisely with the topic of the reform of the United Nations.

The report of the Secretary-General, "We the Peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century" (A/54/2000) displays great promise in this direction. The United Nations reform process must continue. The key point is the reform of the Security Council. The positions and the opinions of Member States on the crucial issues of Security Council reform — the increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent members and the issue of the veto right — unfortunately still vary greatly, making it very difficult to achieve a substantive outcome in the near future. The results of the work the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of

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the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council for the past seven years are not encouraging. Despite this, Slovakia will support the renewal of the Working Group's mandate for the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. We consider next year's session of the Working Group to be crucial for the further advancement of the reform process within this forum.

Slovakia has already presented its position regarding to the key issues of Security Council reform. We support strengthening its representative character, effectiveness and transparency of the decision-making process and working methods.

With regard to the enlargement of the Council, we consider the increase in the number of members in both categories to be justified. However, in our view, the number of members in both categories does not have to necessarily increase simultaneously. The failure to reach an agreement on one category should not prevent the eventual conclusion of an agreement on the enlargement of the other. The total number of members should not exceed 25, in order not to jeopardize the Council's effectiveness and flexibility in immediately reacting to crisis situations. The Group of Eastern European States, whose membership has more than doubled over the past years, should not be omitted from the enlargement of the Security Council.

Since its founding, the United Nations, as the world's universal organization, has under the Charter assumed primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. This concept continues to be fundamental to the United Nations and is reinforced every time an international development necessitates a call to our community for rapid peacekeeping response.

The evolution in the nature of United Nations peacekeeping operations — from performing traditional military functions to the greater need for multidisciplinary approaches, including interim administration and post-conflict peace-building — along with the significant expansion of regional and international conflicts worldwide and the growing demand for the involvement of the United Nations in their prevention and settlement, puts the United Nations potential in this vital area to a challenging test. The need for peacekeeping has never been greater. However, such international assistance can be effective only if it is based on peacekeeping operations well suited to dealing with all the problems and the needs of the situation to which it is deployed.

Therefore, we welcome the report of the expert Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, which we consider to be an important step toward a meaningful reform of United Nations peacekeeping activities. The Brahimi report (A/55/305) presents a serious challenge to various actors involved in meeting the requirements of today's peacekeeping operations.

One should agree, and recent experience has confirmed, that good intentions in deploying peacekeeping operations must be supported by clearly defined and achievable mandates. Only an adequate mandate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, can bring success to and strengthen the credibility of the United Nations in its peacekeeping efforts, and not cause more problems. It requires an appropriate and responsible approach by key players, including the Security Council, Member States and the United Nations Secretariat, in acting promptly on their own, as well as effective cooperation to give a rapid and decisive response to conflict situations.

Apart from the reform of the Security Council, qualitative improvements must be achieved in modernizing and streamlining the responsible departmental units in the Secretariat to enhance their efficiency and the effectiveness of their output as much as possible. At the same time, Member States must support the ability of the Secretariat to carry out the tasks we ask it to do, since its ability to act depends on the will of Member States to contribute troops and other assistance to potential peacekeeping operations.

Member States should provide adequately prepared troops who are able to fulfil the tasks assigned. Simultaneously, peacekeeping operations should, from the very beginning, be provided with adequate financial resources to support the wide array of mandates. It is therefore equally important to ensure that the financial system providing the funding for United Nations peacekeeping is stable, equitable and transparent and that there is a flexible mechanism in place with the ability to stabilize finances for current and future peacekeeping operations. The revision of the United Nations peacekeeping scale of assessment over the next few months will provide a genuine opportunity for the General Assembly to take a critical look at the current method of assessment and, with the emerging

consensus of Member States, to take important steps to find a viable solution to this pressing issue.

I am pleased to announce today our strong support for revising the financial structure of peacekeeping and our readiness to meet our financial commitment under a reformed peacekeeping scale.

We would like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his significant role in the process of United Nations reforms. We welcome his commitment to implement the changes recommended in the Brahimi report for which he is responsible. We should do our part and continue our personnel, material and financial support to United Nations peacekeeping missions. Slovakia has traditionally been participating in peacekeeping operations and, as part of its latest activities, is ready to send an engineering unit to the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea authorized by the Security Council last Friday.

Due to the geopolitical position of Slovakia, we closely follow the situation in the Balkans. We are aware that problems can only be effectively addressed, and crises and tension in the region eliminated, when all the countries concerned are maximally involved; when they are willing to collaborate to search for compromises, and are prepared to overlook historical feuds with a view to developing relations in a complicated region, from both an ethnic and nationalistic perspective. We hope that the elections in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will be held in a peaceful atmosphere, and that neither of the parties will resort to violence. It is necessary that the elections abide by the rule of law, and that they be democratic, free and fair. Otherwise, it will be difficult to achieve the basic objective: the stabilization of the situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and in the region as a whole.

In the area of disarmament, we welcome the consensus achieved at the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which confirmed commitments to the provisions of the Treaty and its strengthened review process. This positive impulse needs to be efficiently utilized in the process of further implementation of the Treaty.

We also welcome the ongoing preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in 2001. The outcome of the Conference should provide us with clear strategies on how to cope with the issue in its complexity.

Slovakia fully supports respect for the norms of international law and the execution of international treaties in good faith, in compliance with the principle of *pacta sunt servanda*. The harmonization of traditional theories based on the principle of State sovereignty as the basic element of international law with newly developing principles based on global respect and guarantees of fundamental human rights and freedoms will be necessary for the future development of international law. New ideas and concepts should be the subject of extensive discussion and negotiations between States, resulting in a consensus in the international community, as was the case 55 years ago, when the United Nations Charter was adopted.

Slovakia supports the early establishment of the International Criminal Court. The results of the negotiations of the Preparatory Commission for the International Criminal Court, especially the adoption of the draft Rules of Procedures and Evidence and the Elements of Crimes by consensus last June, are very encouraging.

Slovakia equally supports the work of the United Nations in the field of combating international terrorism. The adoption of the international Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism is the latest fruit of the work in this field. Slovakia will sign the Convention by the end of the year 2000.

In facing all the challenges of our era the United Nations must prove its relevance. Slovakia is convinced of the irreplaceable role of the United Nations in a whole range of global issues, the solution of which is practically impossible by Member States alone, on an individual or group basis, or at a regional level. If we want the term globalization to have only positive connotations, the endeavour to tackle the accumulated problems must become a matter of the highest interest to all of us. I believe that this Assembly will contribute to this endeavour.

The President: I now call on the Acting Chairman of the delegation of Azerbaijan, His Excellency Mr. Eldar G. Kouliev.

Mr. Kouliev (Azerbaijan) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, allow me first of all to congratulate you sincerely on your election to the presidency of the

fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly and to express my confidence that under your skilful leadership the Assembly will cope successfully with all the issues before it.

I would also like to commend the President of the previous session, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, on his remarkable contribution to the success of the fifty-fourth session as well as to the preparations for the Millennium Summit.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate a new Member of our Organization, Tuvalu, and to wish it a successful start in the work of the current session.

Two weeks ago, we all witnessed a unique historic event: the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, in which about 150 Heads of State or Government took part. Remarkable ideas and proposals were voiced and a Summit Declaration was adopted. The time that we have to fulfil the commitments made by our leaders at the Millennium Summit has already begun to elapse.

The twentieth century is coming to an end. Humankind will recall this century as an epoch of outstanding contrasts: scientific-technological and spiritual-intellectual progress, the bloodshed of two world wars, the collapse of empires, the emergence of new sovereign States, the cold war and collective efforts for the sake of peace and stability. What will the world be like in the approaching century?

The end of the confrontation of two systems and the prevalence of ideas about democracy and the free market should contribute to the formation of a world in which the interests of all States are taken into account and a genuine and equal partnership is established. However, an analysis of the development of the international environment leads us to the bitter conclusion that stereotypes of rivalry are still alive. We are living through a very difficult period, when a single wrong step could destabilize the situation and, tragically, lead to a return to the past. We have a long way to go to build a just and secure world order. It can be achieved only by the joint efforts of all States, large and small, rich and poor, developed and developing.

The year 2001 has been declared the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We are convinced that we should not let this opportunity slip by, and should use this dialogue to consider together the prospects for resolving the complex problems facing humankind.

The year 2001 will also stand out because of another remarkable event: the special session of the General Assembly to review the outcome of the World Summit for Children, which will be held next September. I believe that I do not need to underline its significance. As a member of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund, my country is actively participating in the preparations for this important event.

The fact that both of these events are being held at the juncture of two millenniums is highly symbolic and should contribute to the achievement of a qualitatively new level of interaction among States aimed at global progress.

Globalization is the main feature of the current stage of the development of the world economy. It is a complex and objective process. Countries are concerned about the prospects of this phenomenon. While opening up new possibilities for developing economies, ensuring sustainable development and improving the welfare of peoples, globalization could also have tangible negative consequences for States with economies in transition and for developing countries.

In this regard, I would like to underline that the United Nations must make fuller use of its capacities, as well as those of its specialized agencies, to assist States in anticipating and ensuring the early prevention of the possible negative consequences of globalization and the increasing interdependency of States. The United Nations is called upon to continue to play a key and effective role in strengthening international economic cooperation and advising States on all major issues of global development.

Azerbaijan is making its own contribution to the development of the process of globalization. Located at the point where Europe and Asia meet, with a diversified economy and rich in natural resources, including hydrocarbons, my country serves as an effective link in the development of East-West and North-South cooperation. Azerbaijan is actively participating in projects for the development and transportation to international markets of the hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian Sea, as well as in the project to restore the Great Silk Road, all of which are of global importance.

Azerbaijan, together with a number of the Great Silk Road countries, is currently working on a new landmark project, SILKSAT, to provide the countries of the Great Silk Road with a global satellite telecommunications system, in addition to existing communication lines. These projects are crucial to enhancing trade and industrial ties among the participating countries, developing their economies and making them interactive and strengthening their integration into the global world economy.

However, external threats, internal problems, outside pressures and involvement in the struggle for spheres of influence are depriving these young and fragile democracies of the opportunity freely to carry out policies that would respond to the interests and expectations of their people, to strengthen and improve their statehood and to engage in peaceful development. Since their very inception, they have been forced to fight a difficult battle for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As the victims of aggression, seizure of their territory, "ethnic cleansing", aggressive separatism and terrorism, these States rightly expect the United Nations to take the most effective action to create a just and secure world and to protect the principles of the United Nations Charter. Unfortunately, the southern Caucasus has become a region where all of these problems, threats and risks have their explicit manifestation.

The main destabilizing factor of the situation in the southern Caucasus has been the aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan, which has brought incalculable tragedy to millions of people. As a result of the aggression, Armenian armed forces have occupied 20 per cent of the territory of Azerbaijan, carried out "ethnic cleansing" and ousted 1 million Azerbaijanis from their homes. In this connection, the United Nations Security Council adopted four resolutions which unequivocally reconfirmed the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and called for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from all of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. However, from 1993 to date, those Security Council resolutions have remained a dead letter.

Since 1992, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has been engaged in brokering a settlement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but its activities have not been successful. Bilateral discussions between the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia are continuing, but they, too, have failed to produce results. The two countries have observed a ceasefire for the last six years, but it is not a solution to the problem.

We call on the United Nations to take all necessary measures to implement the Security Council resolutions. Peace and security in the region cannot be achieved without a settlement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as other regional conflicts, and the removal of external pressure, including foreign military presence. Bringing political integrity and neutrality to the southern Caucasus would make possible the establishment of a normal relationship among the States of the region and ensure their harmonious integration into the world economic system.

We would like to express our gratitude to the organizations of the United Nations system and to donor countries for their assistance to Azerbaijani refugees and displaced persons, who have been living in great distress for over eight years. Of critical importance to us is the continuation of and increase in the humanitarian assistance being provided to them until they can return to their homes.

The United Nations is the key forum for coordinating inter-State relations. The need to make significant efforts to enhance the Organization's effectiveness is not in doubt. In recent years, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, a serious evaluation of the resources and capacities of the United Nations, as well as of the Organization's activities in the post-cold-war decade, has been made. We had never before heard such self-criticism as that expressed in the reports on tragedies in Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Rwanda. In this general context, we commend and support the Secretary-General's efforts to reform the United Nations.

The United Nations bears great responsibility for the fate of the world, and we place our hopes in it. Serious and rational reforms should increase the effectiveness of the Organization and, first and foremost, of the Security Council. Given the Council's special significance, the question of adopting reform decisions by two thirds of the Member States has been

affirmed by a consensus resolution of the General Assembly. Azerbaijan fully supports such an approach.

We also believe that the representation of the States of Asia, Africa and Latin America in the Security Council should be in keeping with modern political realities. We have already expressed, and today we reconfirm, our support for the election of Germany and Japan as permanent members of the Security Council. At the same time, I would like to point out that one additional non-permanent seat should be allocated to the Group of Eastern European States because of the unprecedented doubling in the membership of the Group. Otherwise, each country of the Eastern European Group could only be elected a non-permanent member of the Council once every 38 years.

We have studied with great interest the Brahimi report on strengthening United Nations peacekeeping capacities. We would not like the ideas and recommendations contained in that remarkable report to remain a dead letter.

We also hope that the International Criminal Court will become an effective organ to bring to justice, on behalf of the international community, those who have committed war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression. Should the Court become hostage to the interests of various groups of States and to the practice of double standards rather than being guided by international legal norms equal for all, perpetrators will go unpunished.

Azerbaijan is interested in taking an active part in combating international terrorism, organized crime and illegal drug trafficking. The fight against those problems, which are growing in scale, can be effective only with the concerted efforts of all countries at both the regional and the global levels.

In this connection, I would like to draw attention to a proposal made by the group of States that includes Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova (GUUAM) on the establishment of an international anti-terrorism centre.

Speaking of GUUAM in a wider context, I would like to stress that the meeting of the GUUAM heads of State during the Millennium Summit could be characterized as a landmark in the history of the group. The New York memorandum adopted at the meeting confirms the orientation of the GUUAM States towards further developing mutually beneficial and multifaceted cooperation in various spheres.

There is yet another urgent issue whose resolution cannot be postponed. I am speaking of the difficult financial situation of our Organization that has arisen as a result of delays by Member States in making their contributions to the regular and peacekeeping budgets. Member States should fulfil their financial obligations to the Organization in full, on time and without any conditions.

At the same time, our delegation believes that the time has come to reconsider the current scale of assessments for both the regular and the peacekeeping budgets. We are ready to cooperate constructively with other delegations on this matter. We believe that the principle of a State's capacity to pay should be the basis for the future reform of the scale of assessments.

Our Organization is designed to play a leading role in overcoming obstacles to global peace and progress. I would like to underscore our collective responsibility for peace and security on our planet, and to express my confidence that the results of the Millennium Summit and the entire fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly will become a reliable basis for achieving a more stable and peaceful twenty-first century.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia and former President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab.

Mr. Gurirab (Namibia): This is neither the place nor the time for me to repeat what my head of State and I have said in speeches regarding most of the critical national, regional and international issues. On those issues Namibia's position is unchanged, and my views remain valid. There are, however, some specific matters that I feel require reiteration. That is what I am going to do today.

Not too long ago in these corridors, an unprecedented 150 heads of State and Government participated in the historic Millennium Summit, which was appropriately dubbed "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century". The Millennium Declaration, which was the result of that concerted effort to meet the daunting challenges of this century with boldness and courage and in a truly global united front, is destined take its place alongside the

Charter of the United Nations as one of the most seminal documents of all time. In responding to the peoples' fervent clarion call to redefine and vigorously support the United Nations mandates and programmes, and to meet the challenges of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases that threaten to decimate our populations while leaving millions of others too weak to derive value from life, the world leaders undertook before the whole world to save humanity from the scourge of war, fear and want.

The citizens of the world paid witness to the sober promises of the Millennium Summit. They wait in earnest for Member States to make good on the pledges made in the Millennium Declaration. They, the peoples, as our ultimate constituencies, are indeed the ones we must serve. However, they are sceptical because of failures to make good on previous pledges. Yet they expect us to implement the undertakings we made at the Summit, committing whatever resources of material or of the heart are called for. For our part, therefore, we must find the collective political will to mobilize the necessary resources to implement the commitments. We must also reconnect with the passion that drove the leaders of the world, determined to spare humanity the devastation of war and deprivation, to found the United Nations.

In responding to this clarion call, Member States must forge a new global partnership between the wealthy and powerful nations and those whose present circumstances leave them mired in the seemingly intractable maze of a merry-go-round type of development. The North must be gracious and generous, and give enough of what has been acquired from global resources to assist poor and weak countries to help propel them into the orbit of sustainable and irreversible social and economic growth.

For its part, the South must not only take sober stock of our present challenges, but also devote energy and creativity to genuinely engage all our countries in a common effort at social development and human security. To do so, we must rise above the temptation to settle scores through armed conflict; place the will and genius of our peoples at the helm of national reconstruction; and give prominence to the credo written in stone on the wall which adorns the courtyard adjacent to the General Assembly, to turn our swords into ploughshares. It is the marriage of this dual commitment of the wealthy and strong, and the presently poor and weak nations, which carries in its womb the child of a new world, aglow in global peace, development and prosperity.

Alongside the Millennium Summit were other major activities of great importance at the United Nations and elsewhere in New York. The Security Council conducted its own high-level consultations, culminating in a categorical commitment, especially to Africa, towards development, peace and security on the continent. The conference of presiding officers of the world's parliaments resolved to work closely with the United Nations in pursuit of people-centred goals. The World Peace Summit, which brought together religious leaders from practically all faiths, in its declaration on a commitment to global peace, in addition to recognizing gender equality, declared all religions to be equal and condemned any violence perpetrated in the name of religion. The non-governmental organizations, which in their summit earlier in May had called for a global solidarity in which corporations would demonstrate a greater sense of social responsibility, especially in the pursuit of the benefits of globalization, reaffirmed their advocacy for social change in their Department of Public Information/Non-Governmental Organization Forum in August. Together, participants in all these gatherings sought to help redefine the pivotal role of the United Nations and all other world organizations in the new millennium in uplifting the peoples of the world.

The active role of grass-roots organizations, both in their own conference and in their interaction with all the other conferences, is a clear sign that "We the Peoples" are actually now firmly reclaiming our legitimate right to be heard wherever States are discussing a new beginning in human relations and the future of the United Nations — our common House. Bearing this in mind, the world's leaders made a special commitment to Africa to implement special measures to address the challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development through such actions as debt cancellation, increased investment and greater access to markets and technology. All human footprints start with the first lonely step.

We had witnessed a robust and generous spirit of teamwork on the part of Member States in preparing for the General Assembly's Millennium Summit and galvanizing a partnership for a successful outcome. In the fullness of time, it all came together, and we got it right, to the satisfaction of all. It was collaboration

rather than competition. Thorns and all, what a beautiful rose it turned out to be.

In Africa, we say that no one man can put his hands around a baobab tree. It requires many hands joined together to form a circle around that proverbial tree. I thank all my collaborators. We are all winners, and the integrity of the United Nations does not just remain intact, but is enhanced. I remember, though, what my President and Co-Chairperson of the Millennium Summit, Mr. Sam Nujoma, stressed in his closing statement:

> "[W]e have adopted a historic Declaration with a vision for the future ... The Declaration in itself will not put bread on [the] tables [of the peoples of the world], stop the wars, erase poverty ... We cannot, therefore, afford to go back home from here and continue business as usual." (*A/55/PV.8*)

That is the question and, indeed, the challenge for the United Nations and the global community. His counterpart, the President of Finland, Ms. Tarja Halonen, echoed those sentiments in her own closing speech.

Sir, against the backdrop of those profound circumstances and events relating to the Millennium Summit, we welcome a fortunate coincidence which has set the stage for your unanimous election as President of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, together with the eminent members of your Bureau. I congratulate you all warmly and assure you of Namibia's steadfast cooperation.

In my acceptance speech of 14 September 1999, I complained about a creeping but steady derogation of the General Assembly's functions and powers, contrary to the letter and spirit of the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. This situation has hardly changed for the better during the past year. If anything, the encroachment has intensified. I have therefore decided to speak up, so that we no longer take things for granted in the ensuing months.

I found the Office of the President of the General Assembly to be the main target of this unacceptable denigration. In the animal kingdom, the predator goes for the head or the jugular to incapacitate its prey. Well, that seems to be the case here as well. For some time now — prior to my tenure of office — we had been discussing practical ways and means of strengthening the Office of the President to ensure its capacity and effectiveness.

In light of this, I would suggest – subject, of course, to the President's disposition – an early planning meeting involving the President, the Chairman of the Fifth Committee and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to review this situation and to act upon what has already been agreed, including adequate resources for the Office of the President. No President of the General Assembly should be subjected to the whims of faceless bureaucrats as if he or she were asking for personal favours.

In this context, two key paragraphs in the Millennium Declaration are apropos. First, paragraph 30 underscores the commitment to

> "reaffirm the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations, and to enable it to play that role effectively". (resolution 55/2, para. 30)

This is a clear and categorical reaffirmation of the centrality of the Assembly, notwithstanding the existing and desirable division of labour or complementary functions among the principal organs.

Secondly, in paragraph 31, the heads of State and Government collectively state:

> "We request the General Assembly to review on a regular basis the progress made in implementing the provisions of this Declaration, and ask the Secretary-General to issue periodic reports for consideration by the General Assembly and as a basis for further action." (ibid., para. 31)

I would make another suggestion. Under the President's authority, the Bureau should act as an executive arm of the Office of the President, superintending the work of the Assembly and interacting vertically with the heads of the other United Nations bodies. We always have a solid team in the Bureau consisting of the President, 21 Vice-Presidents and the Chairpersons of the six Main Committees for this crucial task. I was privileged to have a team of able ambassadors and, at times, even higher personalities assisting me, to all of whom I remain grateful. The Bureau should be formalized as a political mechanism. What we should be striving for is

a formalized system of regular consultations and better coordination of mandates and action in which the right hand knows what the left hand is doing at all times.

While I will leave these hallowed halls soon and return to my duties as Namibia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Information and Broadcasting, my heart and soul will always be walking the routines of the General Assembly. Namibia's celebrated case for self-determination, freedom and achievement of independence and the greater part of my own personal story — perhaps a bit unlike that of any of my predecessors as Assembly Presidents — are written on these majestic walls. Indeed, it is actually here and nowhere else that one can appreciate the roots and the systemic evolution of the United Nations itself.

Now I want to express some views of my own about the latest buzzword: globalization. In the process, I will also respond to what some say – that the peoples of the third world should not run away in fright from globalization. Frankly speaking, globalization is merely a new name for an old, cruel and unjust system which was imposed willy-nilly upon the peoples of the third world in the past. Globalization is at least 500 years old in the case of Africa. As someone bluntly put it, "globalization is the reformation of what we used to call capitalist imperialism". That is what he said; I think he has a point.

That globalization forcibly introduced the iniquities of the slave trade, colonial oppression, the dispossession of land, racial bigotry and the destruction of our precious lives and cultures is a matter of historical record. We cannot be blamed for harbouring painful memories of the marauding usurpers from Europe peddling the virtues of a civilizing mission. Those uninvited intruders anchored their merchant ships along the coast and put up their foreign flags. Next, millions of people ended up dead, others were shipped off to the diaspora, while the rest became victims of a brutal system of colonialism. That, too, is a matter of record.

The more the benefits of globalization are advertised, the more all of it sounds hypocritical and self-serving. Nobody is suggesting that we must run away from globalization. At the same time, we will keep reminding ourselves of the lessons of history lest we forget the ultimate truth that the lion will not lie down with the lamb. Mind you, industrialization was not bloodless or painless either.

If perchance globalization is to have genuine efficacy, then we in the third world, who constitute by far the majority of the globe, must infuse it with our own vision, our wisdom, our sense of equity and fair play, the essence of the hard lessons we have learned from our history and experience. In such an eventuality, we will have to redesign the basic paradigm of globalization.

On the one hand, it is said that many African States are at risk of missing out on the opportunities offered by globalization; on the other hand, Africans are repeatedly being told to find answers themselves to African problems. Well, which is it? This was never actually said about any other continent or peoples at their worst hour of imminent disaster. I must confess that I do not know how Europe survived the black plague, which decimated its population, killing many hundreds of thousands. But I know, at least, something about contemporary European history of the past 50 years. I think of the devastation and misery in that continent after the Second World War. Concerted political will, massive resources and a gigantic plan of action were put in place to save Europe. It was the famous Marshall Plan that we Africans were forced to read about in schools that did it. Europe was pulled back from a precipice because of that comprehensive and coordinated action of solidarity and today is building a strong Union together. It is clear that there was no idea of abandoning Europe to its own fate. But it was not only that.

There is another instructive example, that of the remarkable Alliance for Progress. That laudable initiative helped Latin America to emerge from an economic and social morass and restored in the people an empowering confidence for the future. Today, we see the great Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) and other important regional economic and trade groupings fostering economic growth, full employment and the generation of wealth for the benefit all in that vital part of the world. For me, that represents the true meaning of human brotherhood and "prosper thy neighbour". Africa's key Western cooperating partners should not hold the view that those two examples are unique circumstances from the remote past or that they are far removed from the hardships and misery that Africa and its peoples are facing today.

Only when pledges made by world leaders are translated into concrete programmes and substantial

resources are made available to achieve the time-bound targets set by the Millennium Summit can we in Africa take comfort in and draw strength from the recent inspiring commitments. Alhough nobility of mind is a necessary prelude to magnanimity, performance is the only vindication of its efficacy. This is because human beings are not known for mental quantum leaps, disregarding embedded social consciousness. Humans tend to hold on to painful memories and to keep reminding their tormentors of their obligation. Hence, the persistent demands in Africa, in Europe, in Asia and in other places for atonement, reparations and compensation and insistence on the return of all stolen cultural artworks, precious relics and sacred icons from abroad to their place of origin — lock, stock and barrel.

Africans, who were wronged more than, or at least as much as, any other group of people, are legitimately entitled to justice on political, legal, and humanitarian grounds. Now is the time to settle that unfinished business and moral deficit.

My good friend said the other day that the best form of diplomacy is to tell the truth. I have some truthful things I want to direct to my own camp — the third world. My remarks will be of a general nature and will likely annoy some of my friends. But in Africa, candour, no matter how distressing it can sometimes be, is not only a form of democracy, but also a language for protecting and strengthening the family. So I am sure that they, too, will understand, because all of it comes from my heart.

I believe we urgently need to review our priorities and map out a new strategy in order to effectively, and in unity, deal with the battles ahead. Once again, we must stand up for our legitimate and just rights. My brother Foreign Minister from a small Caribbean State has pointed out that "there are new forms of war currently being waged on the small, the weak and the vulnerable" in the countries of the South. While this is a confirmation of the obvious, the situation is quite serious.

Ironically, in the South we are waging unconscionable and destructive wars against one another, militarily invading and occupying neighbouring States under the pretext of security or alleged historical reasons. In the process, we create, by omission or by commission, convenient troubled waters for outsiders to fish in. Nations are burning, and peoples are dying from bullets, hunger and infectious diseases at the same time. We are destroying ourselves. This must stop. We really have nobody to blame but ourselves. Rationalizations and excuses made after a fait accompli stink to high heaven. We must regroup and concentrate on development, poverty eradication, regional cooperation and integration. We have agreed to promote a culture of peace, to practise tolerance and to enlarge opportunities for peaceful coexistence. The Havana South Summit and its plan of action gave us an impetus to push ahead in unity and solidarity for our common survival. The people are tired of war; they want food security and life-saving human progress. They want creative leisure and the right to a coherent and planned future for their families and themselves, devoid of fear and heart-rending traumas of violence.

We have before us the current report of the Working Group — the full title is unduly cumbersome — which, for more than six years now, has been dealing with the reform and increase in the membership of the Security Council. When the report is debated, Namibia will give its specific views on its content. Suffice it for me to take this opportunity to heartily commend and congratulate Ambassadors John de Saram of Sri Lanka and Hans Dahlgren of Sweden, who served as Vice-Chairmen under my leadership, for their total devotion and hard work that produced that thoughtful report.

I strongly urge Member States to read the report carefully and reflect on the constructive proposals that are offered in it. While the negotiations on reform must continue, and given the fact that we now have a much clearer picture in respect of the specific open questions, we should revisit the earlier — all or nothing — "package deal" approach. The reform process cannot just continue ad infinitum.

It was by no means meant to become an end in itself. We ought to take a cue from the urgings of the world leaders to move on and show concrete progress as soon as possible. The emphasis on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century necessarily means that we complete the overall reform without further delay, so that the United Nations can perform that role effectively. For the developing countries, the hour is already too late. We have nothing to gain by dragging our feet.

I would like also, in just a few words, to express my astonishment about the contradictory comments that I heard recently about the question of good

governance. Domestically, in the developing countries, good governance has been turned into a sort of a rigid dogma by foreign Powers. But when we call for rapid democratization of and transparency in international relations, open trade and financial rules and good governance, they simply ignore our views willy-nilly. What do we make of this paradox?

At least we have now agreed that there is no commonly accepted definition and practice of good governance anywhere. This was established during the consultations for the Millennium Summit's preparations. It is therefore better for us from now on to put more emphasis on transparent and accountable governance, based on the rule of law, while we continue debating its essential properties that are acceptable to all.

At this stage, I will touch on some issues that require reiterating for clarity's sake. To begin with, South-North dialogue encompasses a broad field, from political and diplomatic exchanges through trade, poverty eradication, investment, technology, industrialization, capacity-building and financing for development to the empowering of people.

A recent cover story in *Time* magazine featured our esteemed Secretary-General. It called him a dreamer. But, to my mind, in today's world of doomed pragmatists and cynics who try to defy any belief in the possibility of a better world for all of us, how refreshing it is that the United Nations is led by an African who is not afraid to dream! In a variation on the lyrics of a popular song, what the world needs now are bold dreamers whose knowledge of the challenges to humanity cannot be questioned, but who believe in the capacity of men and women to rise above their best, to move even farther beyond the horizons of human capability.

That said, questions relating to development, politics, economics, finance and security unavoidably overlap. So also do the challenges of world peace, human rights, human development and human security, social change and prosperity. We cannot, therefore, avoid stressing inclusive and interdependent global governance that militates against war, fear and want. Only in this way will all of us be able to partake together in a culture of peace, dialogue, sharing and the common advancement of humanity.

In such a kinder and inclusive world that we wish to live in, a dreadful notion of humanitarian intervention, by whatever name, does not fit in. Many of us expressed strong reactions against it as a dangerous idea when it surfaced last year. Namibia remains unconvinced and will continue to oppose any form of unilateral humanitarian intervention outside the Charter. Whether we like it or not, this is still a world of diktat by the rich and the powerful against the poor, the weak and the vulnerable. The South is incapable of initiating any humanitarian intervention in the North. But the reverse is not only possible; it can be an ominous certainty. Can Kuwait, Cyprus, Saint Lucia or Namibia really dare launch any humanitarian intervention anywhere in the world? They just cannot. Quite simply, in a world of lopsided military might, humanitarian intervention is yet another code-name for colonization. This issue is on the agenda and will no doubt be debated again in the Assembly. Namibia will air its strong views when we come to that.

The Charter shows the best way forward to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security. What we, the Member States, should concentrate on, therefore, is to speed up the tardy process of reforming, restructuring and democratizing our Organization the better to pursue its lofty goals and to implement the resolutions and decisions that enjoy overwhelming consensus.

This, in a way, brings up the excellent and timely Brahimi report (A/55/305) on United Nations peace operations. The report constitutes a major building block which can provide a basis for discussing and resolving all relevant issues and ideas for concerted efforts in the field of preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution and all other challenges and problems of peacekeeping and peace-building.

The next subject I want to deal with is the recently signed United Nations Global Compact with transnational corporations, this time initiated by the United Nations. We in Namibia, a country which actively promotes smart partnerships and win-win outcomes for government and business, labour and other key players in civil society, see this move as a welcome beginning. However, as is said, trust but verify.

Not too long ago the United Nations used to maintain at Headquarters a watchdog centre for transnational corporations to monitor their nefarious global activities and sinister dirty tricks against the

interests of the people. It was closed down for reasons not yet known.

Many of us from the developing countries ought to remember the call by our leaders in the 1970s for a new international economic order and what became of it. The United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations was a sincere undertaking to establish a data bank and provide Member States with relevant information for follow-up and decision-making. The call for a new international economic order was the South's version of globalization. Yet our leaders were discredited and the initiative itself was unceremoniously killed. Its replacement is already wreaking havoc on our slender prospects for meaningful economic autonomy.

Today, out there in the real world, many armies of grassroots organizations and progressive trade unions are back again on the streets demanding the democratization of international economic and trade relations, transparency, accountability, justice and fair play for the poor, the weak and the vulnerable. This is not a passing wave, but a telling sign of things yet to come.

The United Nations should, therefore, avoid being caught in the middle of the crossfire. The situation requires vigilance and leadership to ensure that the corporations do not entangle the Organization in their unsavoury dealings, as some of them are already being accused of doing. I am aware of the written commitments, agreed rules and broad principles in the Compact. But that is one thing. That aside, this is only the beginning, and things will perhaps go wrong down the road. I myself encouraged constructive partnership between the United Nations and the private sector. That does not mean, however, that all that glitters is gold.

One more matter of deep interest to my country, and indeed to Africa, is information and communication technology — ICT. The information and communication technology revolution is the most significant social, political and economic phenomenon since the Industrial Revolution. Its ability to transform societies is commonly acknowledged. Several weeks ago the Economic and Social Council summit, held here at United Nations Headquarters, focused totally on it.

Yet, ironically, and to some extent in an uncanny way, this economic panacea has been presented to Africa not as a tool for self-development and jump-starting global competitiveness, but as yet another "crime of incapacity" used to further overburden an already embattled people.

Our challenge, the challenge to all of us here, and to all those who have had a head start in mobilizing this new capacity for the creation of wealth and a better world, is: what can we do, what must we do, to enable Africa and other developing countries to gain access to the tools of information and communication technology, so that we can take ownership of our own social development and achieve full employment and prosperity?

Those who control this powerhouse must act quickly and generously to share the benefits of this magic wand, especially since the sons and daughters of Africa and of the developing world are in fact among the major players in creating this new knowledge. To those who may begrudge Africa's access to information and communication technology, I say, "Just think: if information and communication technology enables Africa to create wealth rather than manage poverty, then in a few years Africa will be so developed that you will no longer have to endure the guilt of turning us away from your front steps."

In thanking the Secretary-General and his loyal Deputy, Ms. Louise Frechette, for their unstinting support and encouragement, I would be remiss if I did not also mention the General Assembly's chief stewards and staff members for their expertise and hard work. I extend the same sentiments to the security and protocol officers for rendering such outstanding professional services. My heartfelt gratitude goes to one and all.

In conclusion, for Namibia the year 2000 brought rededication to service, celebration and thanksgiving. It meant awesome responsibilities in the General Assembly, including during the Millennium Summit; in the Security Council; in the World Health Assembly; and lately in the chairmanship of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), our subregional body. One needs allies, friends and partners for all this to happen, and we are lucky to have many of them throughout the world. We sincerely express our immense indebtedness to all of them.

I know that I have been long-winded. I had a few things to say.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Shunmugam Jayakumar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore.

Mr. Jayakumar (Singapore): First let me warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election, which is doubly significant, as few Prime Ministers have held the post of President of the General Assembly. Your unique practical experience in both domestic and international affairs will stand us in good stead as we try to reform the United Nations. I also thank your distinguished predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for the excellent work he has done and for ushering the United Nations successfully into the new millennium.

As a fellow small State, Singapore is also delighted to extend a warm welcome to Tuvalu, the United Nations newest Member. We hope that Tuvalu will also join the Forum of Small States.

As the text of my speech has been circulated, in the interest of saving time I will not read the entire text.

The recently concluded Millennium Summit confirmed that the United Nations, whatever its imperfections, remains an indispensable organization. The overriding theme of the speeches in plenary meetings was the need for the United Nations to be revitalized and better equipped to deal with the challenges of the twenty-first century. Our immediate challenge is to respond with concrete follow-up. This may be stating the obvious but doing it will not be easy nor is it assured. The United Nations record of implementation, it must be conceded, has not always inspired confidence.

In his report to the Millennium Summit, the Secretary-General drew attention to a 1999 Gallup poll of some 57,000 individuals in 60 countries. One conclusion was that, globally, less than half of those interviewed judged the performance of the United Nations to be satisfactory. We need to reflect on this. But it is also an unfortunate fact that the United Nations has not usually got credit for what it has done successfully, while continuing to attract criticism for what it has not yet done. Thus, a critical political factor — hitherto inadequately addressed — is how to manage expectations.

Managing expectations is a key to success. The window of opportunity opened for the United Nations by the end of the cold war was perhaps squandered by an overly ambitious agenda, leading almost inevitably to disillusionment. We should not repeat this mistake after the Millennium Summit. To resolutely implement the Summit's results, we must not only accurately identify them, but engage in a realistic assessment of what is and is not possible. Otherwise, we risk undermining the political will and support needed for the United Nations to be effective.

The United Nations serves two essential functions for our community of nations. It provides all of us with a valuable instrument to advance our common interests, including the setting of norms for relations between nations and on human rights. It also provides each of us with an important avenue to advance or defend our national interests. There is no necessary contradiction between these two functions. That which is in the interest of humanity ought to be in our individual national interests. But the practical problem is in identifying what is common and reconciling different national interests.

The twentieth century has seen a creative tension between two apparently contradictory sets of ideals: the sovereignty of nation States and the progressive elaboration of international law and organization. Sovereignty implies the right of each State to determine for itself its own rules. Yet today States interact within a web of complex relationships, international institutions and regimes, covering an ever-widening range of matters, which implies a serious limitation of sovereignty. We live with this apparent contradiction every day.

But we do not have to choose between the two ideals of absolute sovereignty or absolute international law and organization. The real question is how to strike an appropriate balance to move forward.

It was therefore timely for the Secretary-General to convene the Millennium Summit. We now have a broad consensus on what to do to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The question then is: how do we proceed from here. Taking a narrower but more focused approach may be the only practical solution to many seemingly intractable issues. But I do not underestimate the complexities of putting this into practice. Let me illustrate the complexities with reference to two of the core functions of the United Nations: development and security.

On development, earlier calls for a new international economic order fell on deaf ears. The stalemate in North-South negotiations over the last three decades or so was the direct consequence of the resistance on the part of certain developed countries to admit the necessity of changing the functioning of the world economy.

However, I believe that resistance can be more easily overcome and the urgent remedial action that is needed may be easier to take if there is a mind-set shift by both developing and developed countries. The candid debate the leaders had at the recent interactive round table discussions saw a common acknowledgement that both the North and the South must find collective solutions to the problems of development. There was agreement that developing countries must be given help to build up capacity to benefit from the forces of globalization. The developed economies have also pointed out that they too face serious problems that can be attributed to the pressures of globalization. But there can be no doubt that the problems of the South are of a far greater magnitude and deserve far more attention. Domestic problems at home should not give the North any excuse to ignore their important international obligations.

Today, it is commonly accepted that no country, whatever its development status, can afford to opt out of the global economy or go it alone. The issue for all is to develop the national capacity to take advantage of the benefits of globalization while mitigating its downsides.

The United Nations is now in its fourth development decade. A new discipline for both developed and developing countries is needed if the results are to be less disappointing than the first three. The issue for the United Nations is to help the developing countries acquire the capabilities to deal with the pressures of globalization and to plug it.

In this process, difficult domestic structural changes will be necessary to ensure that policies and institutions meet international best practices. These standards are today largely Western, but can and ought to be internationally negotiated. And it is imperative that the developed countries avoid a sterile "one-size-fits-all" prescription. As suggested by the Secretary-General, the United Nations can play a mediating role in the negotiations so that it will not be undertaken on the basis of categories biased towards zero-sum solutions. Instead, the United Nations can help develop "win-win" solutions for both developed and developing countries.

However, the United Nations cannot work in isolation. The United Nations has a role to play to ensure that the international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization coordinate their efforts and work as one team. No other institution is better placed than the United Nations to do this. The United Nations is the natural forum for regular dialogues among the multilateral organizations to coordinate programmes that would help developing nations build capacity. The United Nations could also help make the decision-making processes of these organizations more transparent, consultative and inclusive.

Turning next to security, the end of the cold war has obviously not meant the end to international conflict. In the eleven years since the end of 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell, the Security Council authorized some 40 peacekeeping operations. But in the preceding 42 years, it had authorized only 17. It has been estimated that the total cumulative amount of the United Nations peacekeeping budget from 1948 to 1989 was $3 billion. But since 1989, it has escalated to about $18 billion. Not only have the numbers and the costs of peacekeeping operations risen sharply, but their scope has also changed. Of the 40 peacekeeping operations authorized since 1989, only five were clearly in response to clear inter-State conflicts.

Throughout history we have witnessed oppressive internal conflicts and human rights atrocities perpetuated by a State against its own people. The difference today is that with the advent of technology, instant communication through television, the Internet and the role of non-governmental organizations, these conflicts and atrocities are made known to the whole world instantaneously. Very few are regarded as purely local or regional situations. Most are regarded as internationalized. This galvanizing of public outrage leads to expectations that the international community must act. Often this increases the pressures on the United Nations and the Security Council to take interventionist actions, severely testing the United Nations capacity and stretching its resources. The dilemma is: how can the United Nations be responsive to these pressures if its Members are unwilling to give it the required resources. And if the United Nations

tries to be selective, how can it prevent itself from being accused of practising double standards?

In 1995 Professor Paul Kennedy of Yale University, who headed a team of scholars retained by the United Nations Secretariat to study the future of the Organization, concluded that Member States faced an urgent decision: either to reduce their demands on the United Nations, thereby giving it a decent chance to carry on at a lower level of activity within existing resources, or to expand available resources so that the United Nations could meet what Professor Kennedy saw as inexorably growing demands from Member States unable to cope with the technological pace, population growth and environmental pressures of the twenty-first century. He concluded that, in the light of global circumstances, opting for expanded resources would be the wiser choice.

There is now a growing consensus that it is important to ensure that the United Nations has adequate resources for its current and future peacekeeping activities. Discussions on how this can best be effected are already under way and Singapore supports them. Nevertheless, let us not forget that every prudent accounting must deal squarely with how decisions are made on peacekeeping operations. We have to be honest here. There is no level playing field. Most of the time, most decisions are in reality made by the permanent members of the Security Council. The rest of us have to pay our dues, but have a minimal say in the decisions.

Hence, when we review the current peacekeeping scale of assessments, we hope that the Security Council will also review its current decision-making procedures.

Recent developments in Africa serve as a sobering reminder of the need to undertake an urgent overhaul of United Nations peacekeeping. The Security Council met at the level of heads of State and Government during the Millennium Summit to discuss the need to ensure an effective role for it in maintaining international peace and security, particularly in Africa. Sadly, apart from a general description, the Security Council summit did not produce any new concrete proposals for or commitments to further action. The Council could and I believe should do better than this.

Fortunately, the Brahimi Panel has come up with a set of concrete recommendations, which when put in place will significantly revamp United Nations peacekeeping. In a nutshell, the Panel advocated that should the United Nations decide to send a peacekeeping force to uphold peace, the peacekeepers must be rapidly deployed with a credible deterrence, and be authorized, with robust mandates, to carry out their mission and defend themselves. Only then can the tragedies of past peacekeeping operations be avoided. What this entails is that United Nations peacekeeping missions must be given the necessary resources, including better trained and better equipped peacekeepers, and receive better support from United Nations Headquarters — in particular, an enlarged Department of Peacekeeping Operations. In turn, Member States must have the political will to support the United Nations politically, financially and operationally.

I think I have said enough to underscore the point that a focused approach is not necessarily an easier or less complex one, but I believe that it is the only practical way forward.

The Secretary-General's report to the Millennium Summit was designed as a guide to action, and it should be actively used as such and not simply praised and then forgotten. We took the first step at the Millennium Summit by endorsing and adopting many of the proposals of the report in the form of a Millennium Declaration. The real challenge now is to fulfil the ambitious and wide-ranging promises that we have made to the world.

Where are the material, financial and human resources to come from to fulfil our promises? The United Nations Secretariat and agencies by themselves obviously do not have them. The United Nations cannot do everything on its own. As the millennium report makes clear, the necessary long-term effort to deliver the solution will have to be shared — shared among national Governments, the United Nations, other international institutions and other important actors, such as corporations and non-governmental organizations. Then, and only then, will there be any chance of success.

The Millennium Summit has provided a good basis on which to begin the process of practical negotiations that will lead to real solutions, rather than political posturing, which will only complicate already complex issues. We must start somewhere. I suggest that we start here and now.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Elmira Ibraimova, Chairperson of the delegation of Kyrgyzstan.

Mrs. Ibraimova (Kyrgyzstan): At the outset, Sir, I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as President of this historic Millennium Assembly and wish you every success in your important mission. I also pay tribute to Mr. Gurirab for his skilful leadership during the fifty-fourth session.

My delegation welcomes Tuvalu as the newest Member of the United Nations.

All of us were witnesses to the historic Millennium Summit, at which an unprecedented number of heads of State and Government gathered to address the issues of the future of humanity. Many leaders reiterated that our future depends on our common efforts for humanity's betterment, and that the United Nations has always been, and continues to be, a unique forum which, by virtue of its universal character, has the mandate to solve the pressing problems of peace, security and development.

In this regard, the Kyrgyz Republic favours increasing the overall effectiveness of the United Nations and recognizes that the United Nations should be a results-oriented Organization. Kyrgyzstan supports measures aimed at transforming the United Nations into an Organization with a more perfect management and a well-ordered structure, and thus better prepared to cope with both humanitarian and political crises.

Emphasizing the importance of the United Nations as a global Organization of the human community, Kyrgyzstan supports the universal character of its reforms, which should include all bodies of the United Nations, including the Security Council. Confirming its position on the quantitative expansion of the Security Council in both categories, the Kyrgyz Republic favours clear, geographical representation of the countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

A decade ago Kyrgyzstan chose as its goal the establishment of a democratic open society and an economy based on free market principles. Today we can look back at our first 10 years with some satisfaction. However, the invasions of international terrorists into the southern part of the Kyrgyz Republic in 1999 and August this year have shown that the new democracies are very fragile. These events also testify to the fact that international terrorist organizations have every intention of perpetrating their criminal activities using the territories of the States of Central Asia. These actions should be seen for what they are: part of the global plan of international terrorism, with the express purpose of destabilizing a wide region.

No individual country can cope with these challenges on its own. It has become quite clear that terrorism represents a threat to the whole global community, which can, and should, take adequate measures in the struggle with this evil. The struggle against terrorism should be conducted at the national, regional and international levels.

Kyrgyzstan has contributed to strengthening the global consensus on combating international terrorism. Furthermore, as of this year, Kyrgyzstan is a party to three major international Conventions, and a Protocol, against terrorism. Kyrgyzstan is currently working on becoming a party to the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, adopted by the General Assembly on 15 December 1997, and the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, which was opened for signature this year.

An important step towards strengthening regional security is the Summit of the heads of State of the members of the Shanghai Five, which is assuming a definitive character. The Bishkek group has been created within the framework of the Shanghai forum. This group of law-enforcement bodies and special services of the member countries conducts work on the coordination of our countries' actions in preventing and confronting all manifestations of international terrorism, extremism, separatism, the illegal drug trade, the smuggling of weapons, illegal migration and other kinds of criminal activity. The anti-terrorist centre of the Shanghai Five is currently being created, with its headquarters in Bishkek.

The Bishkek meeting of the heads of State of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and the special envoy of the President of the Russian Federation, which was held on 20 August 2000, demonstrated the unanimous resolve of the countries of Central Asia and Russia jointly to eradicate the threat of terrorism in their territories. We believe that the efforts of our countries will be supported by the international community. The United Nations plays the most important role in this process. The Kyrgyz

Republic is taking action in favour of the creation of an international system of measures for controlling terrorism and other forms of extremism. In this regard, we are considering with interest Uzbekistan's initiative to establish an international counter-terrorism centre within the United Nations system.

The efforts made by Kyrgyzstan and other States of Central Asia in the struggle against international terrorism, religious and political extremism and illegal drug trafficking, will not be crowned with success without the normalization of the situation in Afghanistan. We express the hope that effective measures for the radical improvement of conditions in Afghanistan will be undertaken. It is particularly important to guarantee that such forms of common activity be further developed. Furthermore, expressing its sincere aspiration to promote the prompt establishment of peace in Afghanistan and stability in the region as a whole, the Kyrgyz Republic confirms its readiness to make its territory available for the holding of a peace conference on Afghanistan under the auspices of the United Nations.

In its desire to make its own contribution to the efforts of the global community in creating a safe, nuclear-free future, Kyrgyzstan is continuing to move forward with its very active participation in the creation in Central Asia of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. We welcome the assistance of the United Nations in the realization of this initiative. We express our hope that the countries of Central Asia will successfully finish the work on the drafting of a treaty that responds to the interests of the peoples of the region and of the entire international community.

The issue of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty cannot be avoided when speaking about world security. Signed in 1972, it became an important cornerstone of strategic stability. In this regard, we should reaffirm today its role in international security and our need to strictly observe it and comply with all of its provisions.

The Kyrgyz Republic aspires to make a contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations. Kyrgyzstan is currently represented in the peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone and Kosovo. My country is going further to make efforts to expand its contribution to the peacekeeping activities of the United Nations.

For Kyrgyzstan, a country with an economy in transition, the most significant problems are those of development. The key role in their resolution should be played by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as the main body of the United Nations responsible for coordinating the provision of assistance with national development purposes. The Kyrgyz Republic welcomes the decisive steps taken by the UNDP Administrator aimed at structural reform and the easing of the heavy financial burden, which can threaten the realization of a number of national projects on democratic and economic reform.

With regard to the problems of financing for development in the context of globalization and interdependence, Kyrgyzstan draws particular attention to financing for the eradication of poverty. The Secretary-General's report (A/54/2000), "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century", has identified poverty as one of the main challenges facing mankind. Shorn of all the sophisticated economic rhetoric, poverty reduction means simply the creation of new jobs and productive activities that will provide people not only with income and employment, but also with self-respect and hope for their future and the future of their children. Special measures should be taken by the international community to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition in their efforts to develop and participate fully in the global economy.

The establishment of a uniform transport system is especially important for Central Asia, which is located far from major sea routes. Kyrgyzstan is working for the development and realization of large, regionally important projects, such as the creation of a uniform transport system with access to external markets and of modern communication systems. This will not only optimize the global transport system by reducing distances and transportation time, but also provide a very powerful impetus for economic development because of the expansion of exports. Such large projects as the transport corridor between Europe, the Caucasus and Asia, known as TRACEKA, have already begun to be developed and realized.

Mr. Shihab (Maldives), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We support those provisions of the Secretary-General's report that address the issue of the building of "digital bridges". It is obvious that the huge progress in computer science and telecommunications has radically changed the picture of the world. The

telecommunications "Silksat" project has been developed for the purpose of preventing the threat of information breakdown between countries. Its purpose is to facilitate the optimal entry of the countries of the Great Silk Road into the global telecommunications system.

The Kyrgyz Republic, believing that stability has not only political and economic aspects, but also an environmental perspective, submitted to the Secretary-General this year its instruments of ratification and accession to the following treaties concerning environmental issues: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution; the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade; and the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

Today the Kyrgyz Parliament is working on the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, in support of the idea expressed by the Secretary-General in his millennium report that

> "The need to preserve biodiversity is a less self-evident conservation issue than polluted beaches, burning forests or expanding deserts. But it is as crucial, if not more so. " (A/54/2000, para. 293)

I would add mountain ecosystems to the Secretary-General's list of major ecosystem concerns. I take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to the global community for its support of Kyrgyzstan's initiative with the adoption during the fifty-third session of resolution 53/24, proclaiming 2002 the International Year of Mountains. We express the hope that its observance will promote mobilization by the international community of economic, technical and financial resources for the sustainable development of mountainous areas. To that end, the Kyrgyz Republic offers to host in Kyrgyzstan in 2002, under the auspices of the United Nations, of an international conference on mountains.

In preparation for the International Year of Mountains, we call on States and international organizations to give further attention to the problems of preserving the natural balance of mountainous ecosystems and the development of mountainous countries and regions. We commend the Food and Agriculture Organization, the leading agency for preparing for the Year, for its comprehensive concept paper on mountain issues and for its tireless efforts in that field.

Kyrgyzstan supports the initiative of the Republic of Tajikistan to proclaim 2003 the year of fresh water, within the framework of the United Nations. We hope that the global community will support it.

Kyrgyzstan faces problems in dealing with natural disasters and their regularly occurring consequences, especially in mountainous regions. The Kyrgyz Republic has a direct interest in the further strengthening of the international capacity to deal with accidents, in advanced specialized technologies to cope with the consequences of accidents, and in increasing the coordination of the rescue services of various countries.

In conclusion, I assure the President that the Kyrgyz delegation will take a most active part in achieving our overall common purpose: to ensure the successful work of the Millennium Assembly.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Motsoahae Thomas Thabane, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lesotho.

Mr. Thabane (Lesotho): On behalf of the Government and people of Lesotho, I extend our most sincere congratulations to the President on his election to preside over the fifty-fifth session, and wish him every success in the discharge of his duties. We are confident that his personal, diplomatic and leadership qualities will guide us through the session, and assure him of our support and cooperation at all times. Let me also pay a well deserved tribute, and express our thanks and gratitude, to his predecessor, our colleague, Minister Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia. We thank him in particular for his statesmanship, sterling guidance and effective organization during the difficult times of the fifty-fourth session.

We also remain deeply indebted to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his continued dynamic leadership and commitment to our Organization, and for his relentless efforts in achieving the Organization's goals.

The admission of a new Member to our Organization is always a moment of joy, and that of Tuvalu is no exception.

This, the first session of the General Assembly in the new millennium, offers an opportunity for us to reflect on the challenges and threats we face as we enter the new century, a century that has ushered in a revolution that future generations will likely characterize as one that had the greatest impact on human civilization since the advent of the telegraph, radio and television. The world is indeed witnessing a revolution in the information systems and their integration into the lives of men, women and children, leading to the term "information age". The information age of the twenty-first century is taking root as it impacts on the lives of all sectors of society at both the national and international levels.

There can be no doubt that for some information technology and globalization are beginning to turn theoretical possibilities into fact, as the use of computers and computer-dependent systems have resulted in improvements in basic health conditions and increases in life expectancy, efficiency and productivity, thus offering tremendous economic potential and prosperity. Unfortunately, the majority of others who have been left out of that prosperity continue to live in conditions of extreme poverty, remain embroiled in unending conflicts and are ravaged by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other diseases.

The challenge for the United Nations of the twenty-first century is to eliminate those disparities by bringing poor countries into the digital age, thus making them extract value from globalization instead of watching globalization extract value from them. Education remains the key for the attainment of these objectives. In fact, our message from Lesotho here is: education, education, education.

A disturbing phenomenon for the international community, and in particular for Africa, is that while the rest of the world is experiencing an increased flow of financial resources Africa's development prospects continue to be hampered by unsustainable debt servicing obligations. Just as we have placed poverty eradication at the centre of economic and social development, it is equally necessary to accord similar importance to the debt problems of developing countries. In our view, that would be a vital contribution to the realization of the goal of halving the proportion of people whose income is less than $1 a day by 2015.

Lesotho falls into the category of countries that are not eligible for debt relief under the existing framework. In our Millennium Summit Declaration we made pledges to grant more generous development assistance to poor countries that plan to apply their resources to poverty reduction and to deal comprehensively with their debt problems. We need to concretize these pledges by adopting measures to accelerate debt relief such as the cancellation of the official debt of those countries and the expansion of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. This would assist us in ensuring that by 2015 the majority of our people have access to safe drinking water, that all children complete a full course of primary education, and that joblessness is reduced among our youth. It would also help us curb the spread of HIV/AIDS and assist the children orphaned by this scourge.

The Government of Lesotho adopted poverty reduction as its highest development priority in its sixth and seventh National Development Plans. We have taken firm measures to reduce poverty. Based on our democratic dispensation and peaceful environment, we have successfully embarked on an aggressive investment promotion campaign for job creation. I am pleased to report that we are experiencing initial success in attracting foreign investment.

We believe that South-South cooperation is an important tool for developing and strengthening the economic independence of developing countries. To this end, we in southern Africa have made modest but encouraging progress with respect to South-South cooperation by accelerating the entry into force of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Trade Protocol, which encompasses deeper economic cooperation, cross-border investment and trade, free movement of factors of production, and free movement of goods and services.

The Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to be held in Brussels next year, is both timely and crucial. Since this body recognized, some years ago, the least developed countries as the poorest of the developing countries, there has not yet been any improvement in the weak economic situation of those countries, whose numbers have instead increased from 25 in 1971, to 48 in 1997.

Lesotho therefore looks forward to the Conference, which will review the internal constraints to the development of the least developed countries and

the adequacy of international support measures in the critical areas of official development assistance, debt relief, market access and trade.

The High-level International Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development, to be held in 2001, will come to naught unless we are resolved to undertake it armed with the requisite political commitment and global solidarity to achieve our development goals nationally, regionally and internationally.

The Government of Lesotho remains keenly aware that good environmental management requires concerted efforts from all members of the community. Therefore, we have established partnerships at the international, regional and national levels to address the problems of environmental degradation. We believe that the environment is too important an issue to be left in the hands of one Organization. In this regard, we look forward to the process of the 10-year review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), at which we will share our experiences with, and learn from, our counterparts in the international community.

Regarding the integrated and coordinated implementation of, and follow-up to, the major United Nations conferences and summits, my delegation values the review meetings because they offer us the opportunity to evaluate our performance and to consider the way forward. They also rekindle our political commitment to achieving global developmental goals. We therefore feel that the review process should continue in the twenty-first century, with a stronger emphasis on the evaluation of achievements and constraints.

Like globalization of the economy, globalization of human rights cannot be avoided. Today human rights are well established as the legitimate concern of all humanity. If, as the world agreed in Vienna in 1993,

> "the promotion and protection of all human rights is a legitimate concern of the international community" (*A/CONF/157/24,chapter III, section I, para.4*),

this calls for a more pragmatic approach in identifying pertinent situations requiring the protection of humanity, including in situations where a state has collapsed or disintegrated.

Among the promising developments as we begin the century is the growing world consensus on the need to stop impunity by punishing those responsible for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, as evidenced by the number of signatories and ratifications to the Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). This momentum has rekindled our hope for peace and for an end to the persistence of human rights violations. Lesotho's ratification of the ICC Statute is a further clear indication of its commitment to the protection of human rights and to bringing to justice all those who commit gross violations of these rights.

As we celebrate the fifth anniversary of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, we must be reminded that the goal of gender equality is far from being achieved. Despite pessimistic forecasts, and despite different evaluations of the achievements of the special session on women, the Beijing + 5 conference's adoption of a final document proposing a series of actions and initiatives in the 12 critical areas identified in Beijing is an indication of the international community's renewed commitment to women's rights. Implementation of the norms enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women remains critical for the attainment of the goals set in Beijing.

As technology brings the peoples of the world closer together, thus removing political and other barriers, societies continue to be ravaged by racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, exemplified by "ethnic cleansing", racial hatred and new forms of slavery. A challenge for the United Nations is to define goals and global strategies focused on urgent and effective measures to eliminate racial discrimination and ethnic conflicts. Lesotho thus welcomes the convening of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, to be held in South Africa in 2001. This Conference will offer an opportunity for us to develop action-oriented measures to rid the world of these scourges.

Preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological — remains one of the most important tasks facing humankind in the twenty-first century, as these weapons remain a major threat to world peace. The pursuit of arms reduction and the challenge of achieving sustainable disarmament thus remain the

only bulwark against the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction.

While we welcome the nuclear-weapon States' undertaking to eliminate their nuclear arsenals, their failure to agree to a specific timetable for doing so is regrettable. The challenge is to translate these undertakings into concrete actions to eliminate all nuclear dangers. We thus support the Secretary-General's call for a new international conference on eliminating nuclear dangers as a means of advancing our disarmament goals. We also remain convinced of the need and desirability of convening a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Thanks to the efforts of all actors, both governmental and non-governmental, the world is beginning to witness tangible results as the production, trade and use of landmines slowly drops, thus lowering the number of casualties. This, however, should not lead to any complacency, as evidence of the use of mines in some conflict areas, particularly in Africa, continues to surface. We look forward to a day when the world will be free of these weapons and encourage all those who continue to use mines, as well as those who remain outside the Convention banning landmines, to heed the rapidly growing international and regional momentum for the ban on those weapons.

Lesotho supports the convening of a United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in June and July 2001, as mandated by General Assembly resolution 54/54. We share the view that the outcome of the Conference should be a global action plan with specific timetables for the implementation of commitments on issues such as codes of conduct, legislative and regulatory measures, control, enforcement, transparency, and tracing measures and mechanisms.

The proliferation of armed conflicts in Africa continues to hamper efforts to achieve progress in economic and social development. The lack of political will to find lasting solutions to ongoing conflicts and the emergence of new ones continues to effectively cripple the productive activities of those countries as well as further erode the poor social infrastructure that exists in many countries. The illicit trade in arms, diamonds and other natural resources, as well as the diversion of resources from development to military activities, continue to fuel these conflicts, thus undermining democracy and development.

The challenge for Africa remains the management and resolution of conflicts, the avoidance of war and the strengthening of democratic institutions. These are enormous challenges which require Africa's commitment to stability and the rule of law, but, above all, they require strong political will on the part of the Africans themselves and resources from the international community to reinforce democratic government, to deter attempts to overthrow it and even to reinstate it where it has been overthrown by illegal means.

We in Lesotho have bitter experience of attempts to overthrow a legally and democratically elected Government. Thanks to our SADC partners, order has been restored in Lesotho and the Government is vigorously pursuing a programme of reconstruction, which includes the creation of a climate of political reconciliation on which the consolidation of democratic gains and democratic culture can rest. The Government of Lesotho remains fully committed to developing a culture of democracy, good governance, observance of human rights and constitutionality. The international community's assistance remains indispensable to the success of these efforts. We therefore stand solidly behind the position held by the Organization of African Unity, SADC and the Commonwealth of disallowing Governments that come into power by illegal means from participating in our councils. This should include our councils in the United Nations.

Despite positive steps being taken by the Government of Angola to stabilize the situation in that country, peace continues to elude the people of Angola because of the non-fulfilment by Jonas Savimbi of the Lusaka Protocol. We urge the international community to observe all Security Council resolutions against UNITA and to fully cooperate with the United Nations to ensure the effective implementation of sanctions against UNITA.

We appeal to all parties to the Congolese conflict to honour their obligations under the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and to lend their support to the process of internal dialogue under the facilitation of Sir Ketumile Masire of Botswana.

We support all measures aimed at ending the illicit trade in diamonds in Sierra Leone and applaud the Economic Community of West African States for its efforts to bring peace to that country. We are

gratified to see the cessation of hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea and call on both parties to that conflict to redouble their efforts for a lasting peace. We also urge all armed groups in Burundi to fully and effectively participate in the negotiations so as to facilitate the speedy conclusion of a ceasefire agreement and a comprehensive peace accord. We look forward to the conclusion of the process in Western Sahara so that the people of that country can freely determine their own future.

We reaffirm the right of the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights and we urge parties to the Middle East peace process to redouble their efforts to find durable peace in the Middle East.

The real test for the United Nations in this century is how far it is prepared to go in addressing all these challenges and how far it will go in turning promises into reality, thus enabling the large majority of the people of the world to fulfil their potential and realize their aspirations. While we appreciate the magnitude of these challenges, we continue to have faith in the United Nations capacity to solve global problems, its broad universal support and its ability to uphold and reaffirm our shared values of peace, equity, social justice, democracy and human rights.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hersey Kyota, Chairman of the delegation of Palau.

Mr. Kyota (Palau): It is indeed an honour and a privilege for me to address this body on behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Palau. President Kuniwo Nakamura sends his warm greetings and wishes everyone a successful deliberation during this fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. He also wishes to congratulate and welcome the newest Member of the United Nations, our good Pacific neighbour and friend, Tuvalu.

During the recently concluded Millennium Summit, we addressed many global issues that pose problems and threats to mankind at the national, regional and international levels. These problems must be seriously looked into by this body and other international and regional organizations so that their solutions may be found or remedies provided to alleviate the suffering they impose on our world and its peoples. These problems – ranging from hunger, poverty, tuberculosis, malaria and the spread of HIV/AIDS to global warming and environmental degradation and vulnerability – are not just the responsibilities of the countries or regions that are most affected; every member of the global community must play its part in order for this planet and its inhabitants to survive these destructive forces.

Today, we live in an era in which the production of food is at an all-time high. Advanced technology in the area of food production, improved farming and agricultural methods are readily available and can be successfully applied to widespread areas that are traditionally not suitable to agriculture and farming.

In a similar context, medical research and information can and should be shared universally. An integrated approach to intervention in the field of HIV/AIDS is critically called for in many developing countries. Collaborative health-research projects focusing on the biology of this disease and the development of tools for its prevention and control — including diagnostics, drugs and vaccines — must also be made available and affordable to the many third world countries seriously plagued by this disease. As a global community charged with the responsibility for the security of mankind, we must confront the real danger of HIV/AIDS and work collectively towards the eradication of that horrible disease.

Uncontrolled and unregulated human activities have affected and will continue to affect our ecosystem, thereby endangering and threatening our very existence. Global warming is a difficult and scientifically complicated phenomenon. Even today, scientists are still divided on this issue, particularly on its causes and effects. While some agree that the emission of greenhouse gases and human and industrial activities are responsible for climate change and global warming, others maintain that the changes occur naturally and that, because the earth is so resilient to such changes, none of these occurrences will have permanent effects.

However, as a small island country in the Pacific, Palau has seen and experienced the actual impact of sea level rise, unpredicted weather patterns and an extreme rise in sea water temperature, all of which are signs and indications of global warming and climate change. Many island countries all over the world have also experienced these catastrophic changes. Let us, as world leaders, work individually and collectively towards the real resolution of global warming. The blueprint and foundation of this important task are set

forth in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol. Let us fulfil our roles.

During the Millennium Summit, we also presented institutional issues that should be seriously considered by the entire membership of this Organization. Two further issues were raised by Palau during the Summit: open membership and representational participation in all bodies of the United Nations. The lack of action on these issues on our part, as a body, is quite contrary and detrimental to the objectives of the United Nations.

With regard to open membership, Palau believes that any State that meets the traditional and standard definition of independent State should be allowed membership in the United Nations. To that end, it is the position of the Republic of Palau that the contributions of Taiwan to the global community, particularly the developing countries, more than qualify the Republic of China on Taiwan to fully participate in the United Nations as a full-fledged Member. We strongly support full membership of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the United Nations and appeal to all States members of this body for their support.

Countless achievements concerning the welfare and security of this planet and its inhabitants have been accomplished by this body since its inception 55 years ago. Many important organs and bodies within the United Nations have been created, and some have even been reorganized since then to further promote and enhance the institution's objectives and goals.

However, one very important organ within the United Nations system, the Security Council, has remained virtually unchanged since its inception. Palau truly believes that this important organ should be reorganized and restructured to increase both permanent and non-permanent members in order to strengthen the Council's work and effectiveness. We, therefore, maintain our support of the Millennium Declaration, expressing the determination to intensify our efforts to achieve a more comprehensive reform of the Security Council.

Reform can only materialize if we all agree to a common formula by which the number of permanent and non-permanent members should be increased. The Republic of Palau further maintains that any increase in the permanent membership of the Security Council should reflect a Member State's contribution to international peace and security and its capability to effectively carry out the objectives of the Council. A few countries have surely reached that plateau to serve as permanent members of the Security Council.

Finally, the Republic of Palau reaffirms its commitment to global partnerships in this world of interdependent economies as an essential step towards the achievement of sustainable development. At the fifty-fourth United Nations General Assembly, the Vice President of the Republic of Palau, His Excellency Thomas Remengesau, Jr., addressed the Assembly and spoke of a tri-partite scientific project involving the United States of America, Japan and Palau that was still in its developmental phase. I am deeply honoured today to inform this Assembly that last month the Government of Japan completed the constructional phase of the project and officially handed over the facility to the Government of the Republic of Palau. The next phase is to furnish the facility with the right equipment and tools necessary for scientific research. When fully completed, the Centre will provide scientists and researchers with a state-of-the-art facility for research in the area of coral reefs and marine organisms. Medical research can and will also be conducted in this facility. In addition, the Centre will serve as a tourist attraction, as different exhibits on marine life and a large aquarium will be on display.

At this juncture, I would like to convey our gratitude and thanks to the Governments of Japan and the United States of America for their support in this noble endeavour and welcome any input and contributions from the scientists and researchers of the rest of the Member States to utilize the facility, since we all work towards the common goal of safeguarding and utilizing our environment for the betterment of humanity.

The Palau International Coral Reef Centre project is a clear example of cooperation between developed and developing nations in promoting sustainable development. Financial resources and mechanisms, environmental utility and transfer of sound technology, cooperation and capacity-building have been made available to support this important initiative.

The Republic of Palau continues to be challenged and challenges every Member State to build on the achievements of the last eight years that have passed since the Rio Summit, to look critically at the problems

that are still facing us and to make firm commitments on further progress.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, His Excellency Mr. Hor Namhong.

Mr. Namhong (Cambodia): On behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Cambodia, I am particularly pleased to extend, through you, Mr. Acting President, my warmest congratulations on the occasion of the election of Mr. Harri Holkeri as President of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. May I also convey my congratulations to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, President of the fifty-fourth session, for his eminent leadership and successful steering of the work of that session. Equal congratulations go to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his admirable and untiring efforts made on behalf of peace and development in the world. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Tuvalu into the Organization and to convey the sincere congratulations of the Cambodian delegation. Tuvalu's presence among us will add a new credit to our Organization.

The political platform for economic development, launched by the Royal Government of Cambodia since its formation in 1998, after many decades of civil war and tragedy, and in spite of enormous difficulties and obstacles, has scored good results with regular growth, thus paving the way for a solid foundation for long-term economic growth and sustainable development in Cambodia.

The achievements of 1999, and of the first six months of this year, are encouraging for the future of Cambodia. The Kingdom of Cambodia, with its profound belief that the value of democracy and human rights should be in harmony with cultural peculiarities, traditions, and level of development, considers human rights to be one of the foundations of the system of government. The Royal Government of Cambodia, at present, is making great efforts towards the reinforcement of democratic pluralism and the rule of law.

The recently held Millennium Summit on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century has, through its Millennium Declaration, defined great guidelines on this universal institution's policies and reforms, designed to overcome problems facing our planet in the third millennium. The shared reflection of our leaders is testimony to the aspirations of all peoples throughout the world for a more equitable international environment in the face of rapid globalization and its effects on the economic, social and cultural development of all nations.

On the question of the Security Council, the Royal Government of Cambodia believes, as do many Member States, that it is very important for the Security Council to reflect the reality of today's world. This can be achieved by expanding the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Council to the developing countries and to those countries that have concretely contributed to sharing the burden of United Nations operations. Only through overall reform and enlargement will the Security Council be able to maintain its effectiveness and legitimacy in this new millennium. In this regard, Cambodia strongly supports Japan's and India's permanent membership in this core body of the United Nations.

The Kingdom of Cambodia observes with great interest the situation in the Middle East. We urge both sides to make greater efforts in order to achieve lasting peace in this suffering region. The Kingdom of Cambodia reaffirms its total support for a fair, equitable, durable, and global settlement based on the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and on the application of the agreed-upon peace accords, so that the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people will be recognized by all.

In spite of the consequences of the financial crisis in 1997 and 1998, Asia is on the road to recovery and Asia's economic growth has ever since been recorded. The thirty-third Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ministerial Meeting held this past July in Bangkok bears witness once more to the exemplary solidarity between member States to integrate their economies and to further advance their multiform cooperation.

The Kingdom of Cambodia is very pleased with the inter-Korean summit meeting in Pyongyang last June, which we consider as an important landmark in the relationship between the two brotherly nations, and which has enormously contributed to the maintenance of peace and stability in its region as well as in the whole world and to the peaceful reunification of Korea.

(*spoke in French*)

We are witnessing, today, the growing phenomenon of globalization. There are no States that can avoid its immense impact on our daily life. However, the process of globalization is not a sufficient answer to the quest of the developing countries to reach progress and development for better living conditions of their people. It is clear that the impact of globalization benefits, primarily, States having strong economies and advanced technology, while leaving the least developed countries with little, if any, means to cope with such reality.

The developing countries, especially the least developed countries, that cannot catch up with globalization's speed will be left behind. The rich countries will get richer and more developed, and the poor countries will get poorer and poorer.

Therefore, the Royal Government of Cambodia calls all Member States of the United Nations to unite their efforts and resources to make sure that the benefits of globalization are expanded more equally among the international community and to maximize the positive impact of this phenomenon in order to enable the least developed countries to follow the trend of globalization.

Another aspect of finance for development is the crushing burden of debt that weighs on the developing countries. Debt places a heavy burden on the development process of many developing countries. Unfortunately, the debt strategies that have been implemented so far have not proved capable of solving this problem.

The Royal Government of Cambodia appreciates the initiative taken by some nations in agreeing to solve the intolerable debt burden of the least developed countries. However, the results are currently far from being sufficient. That is why we appeal for these initiatives to be adopted by some other members of the international community, enabling more poor countries to benefit from these human and just actions.

Cambodia sincerely hopes that the Millennium Summit, which has just successfully concluded, will bring about the imperative reform of the United Nations. The reform of this important world body will positively respond to the reality of the world today, and would be able, I hope, to establish a new mechanism to save the developing countries from becoming victims of globalization, even as other countries derive greater and greater benefit.

In this context, as the United Nations has been called upon by the Millennium Summit to play a more decisive role in ensuring that the development of nations is more equitable, it is necessary that this world institution possess the means to support its actions. Also, it is an imperative requirement to establish a new mechanism of relations between the United Nations and the international financial institution.

Moreover, it is necessary to have a new order of international relations in view of the rapid phenomenon of globalization, so as to reduce the ever-increasing unjust gap between the rich and poor countries. I am convinced that this is not a matter of generosity, but a matter of human security, as well as the security of the entire international community.

The Acting President: We just heard the last speaker of the general debate for this morning. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.